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EPA announces approval of DEQ's water-improving assessment

BATON ROUGE – Recently, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality received information from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that will help the department continue to enhance water quality throughout the state. EPA Region 6 announced that it has approved 22 Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) packages submitted by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.

A TMDL is a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant a waterbody can receive and still meet the water quality standards. TMDLs are a way to identify load reductions and other actions that can be taken to improve water quality.

DEQ staff continually assesses water quality of the streams, bayous and lakes throughout the state. By using this data, DEQ scientists can determine pollutant load allocations which will help maintain water quality in waterbodies that are not impaired, and improve those that are impaired.

“EPA’s approval of these TMDLs enhances the way in which DEQ can continue to work toward improving our water quality while protecting our health and preserving our natural environment,” said Mitch Mitchell, Administrator of DEQ’s Water Permits Division. “This information tells us what a stream can absorb and helps us set permit limits accordingly. DEQ is doing historic things in the TMDL arena. Between 2010 and 2011, DEQ public noticed 31 TMDLs, which is more than any time within the last 10 years. The 22 TMDLs approved in 2011 are more than any year since 2002 and the department is on pace to complete more than 43 TMDLS this year, which will be more than any year ever.”

To see the list of 22 TMDLs that were approved, go to www.deq.louisiana.gov and view the attachment below this press release under Latest News.

Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires all states to develop a list of impaired water bodies within their respective state, known as the 303(d) list. Those impaired water bodies do not meet the state regulatory water quality standards, even with current pollution controls in place. Under the Act, states must develop TMDLs which establish maximum amount of pollutant that may be released in to a water body without causing that water body to be impaired or violate state water quality standards. TMDLs also include a margin of safety in order to account for any scientific uncertainties or deviations in water quality modeling assumptions. EPA’s approval of these 22 TMDLs allows for their implementation as formal updates to the Louisiana Water Quality Management Plan.